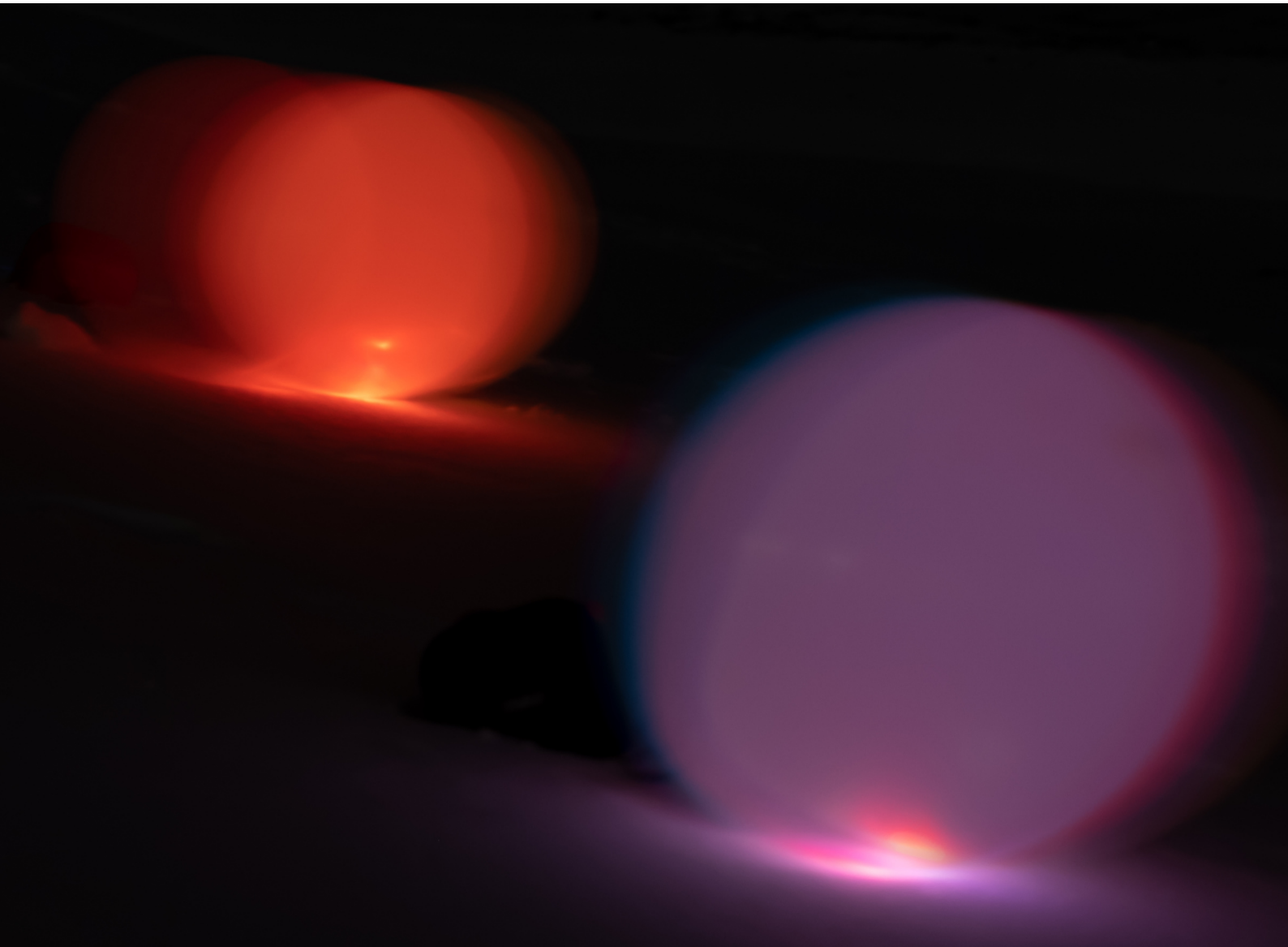
«At this hour, when the rigours of winter have passed,
the serenity and temper of the good old days come to the fore,
they melt and are heard»

François Rabelais

FROZEN DREAMS

Luminous Voices in the Night

audio visual installation
Giuseppe Gavazza and Eugenio Pini



In a dark and silent space, different voices,
in different languages, are broadcasted
from portable speakers anchored
to colorful and luminous balloons.

They tell their dreams, dream memories
that reawaken upon listening.

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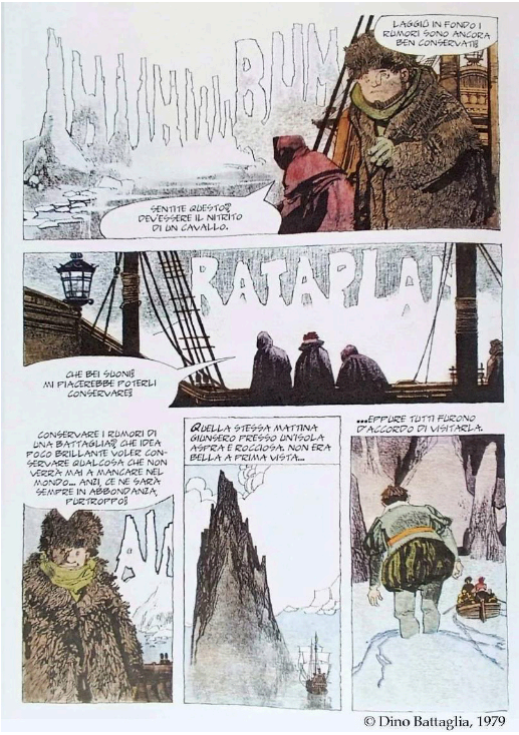
Rabelais's Frozen Words

The idea of Frozen Dreams comes from Les Paroles Gelées (The Frozen Words), a part of François Rabelais's Quart Livre of Gargantua et Pantagruel, a five-book bestseller published between 1532 and 1564 that narrates the fantastical adventures of the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel as they travelled the world in search of the oracle of the Dive Bouteille. In the fourth book (1552) we find the episode of the frozen words in which it is narrated that, while navigating in the Arctic polar circle:



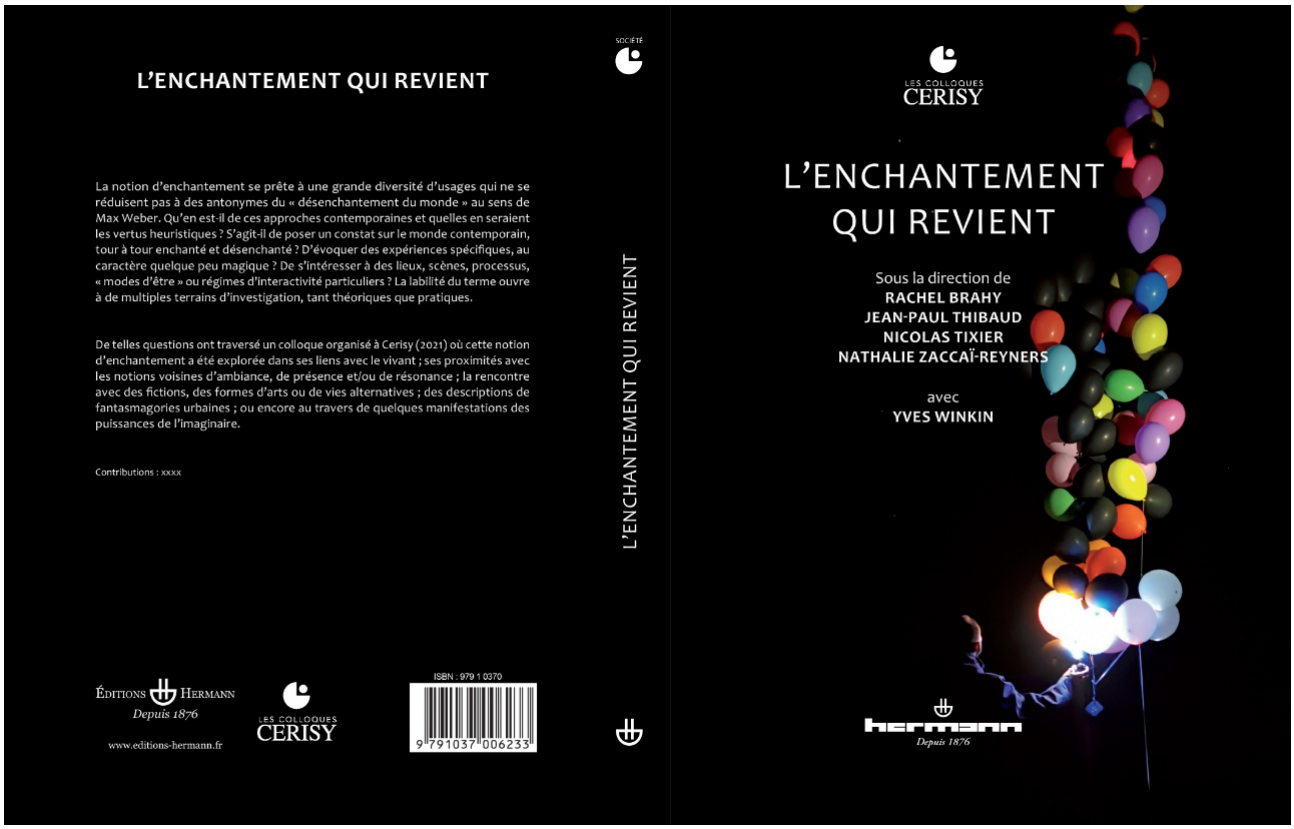
«Icy est le confin de la mer glaciale, sus laquelle feut au commencement de l'hyver dernier passé grosse & felonne bataille, entre les Arismapiens, & les Nephelibates. Lors gelerent en l'air les parolles & crys des homes & femmes, les chaplis des masses, les hurtys des harnoys, des bardes, les hannissemens des chevaulx, et tout aultre effroy de combat. A ceste heure la rigueur de l'hyver passée, advenente la serenité et temperie du bon temps, elles fondent et sont ouyes.»

«This is the edge of the frozen sea, and at the beginning of last winter there was a great and bloody battle here between the Arimaspians and the Cloud Riders. The shouts of the men, the cries of the women, the slashing of the battle-axes, the clashing of the armour and harnesses, the neighing of the horses and all the other frightful noises of battle became frozen on the air. At this hour, when the rigours of winter have passed, the serenity and temper of the good old days come to the fore, they melt and are heard.»

«Les quelles ensemblement fondues ouysmes, hin, hin, hin, hin, his, ticque torche, lorgne, brededin, brededac, frr, frrr, frrr, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, traccc, trac, trr, trr, trr, trrr, trrrrr, on, on, on, on, ououououon [...]»

«When they had all melted together, we heard, "Hin, hin, hin, hin, his, tick, tock, crack, brededin, brededac, frr, frrr, frrrr, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, tracc, tracc, trr, trrr, trrrr, trrrrr, trrrrrr, on, on, on, on, on, ououououon, Gog, Magog," and goodness knows what other barbarous sounds.»

The frozen words as a sonic installation



In the summer of 2021, in the frame of the symposium, *L'enchantement qui revient* (The Enchantment that Returns) held in the ancient castle of Cerisy in Normandy I realized the installation, Dream Clouds. I launched an appeal and collected about 80 dreams told in different languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Korean, Italian, Spanish, Tunisian.

The voices narrating these dreams, diffused through a dozen small loudspeakers hanging from clusters of luminous balloons, were scattered around the castle's park creating an enchanting spread of voices into the night.

Bringing back the frozen words in the Arctic sea

The residency programme of the **Spitsbergen Kunstnersenter** offered the opportunity to work on this project in two phases, corresponding with the winter solstice of 2023 and the summer solstice of 2024. The connection with Rabelais's frozen words triggered an immediate suggestion of dyads: night/day, winter/summer, black/white, dream/waking, the winter night and the summer day, the white of ice and the black of coal mines in Longyearbyen.

With Eugenio Pini, a photographer and videographer with whom I share the residency, wondering how to execute this ephemeral art installation in such a fragile and challenging environment we thought: the frozen dreams should take shape in the documentation of the effort of being realised. A fragmentary reality reactivated in its documentation that gets real in the narration of its becoming.

On Friday 5 January, we presented Frozen Dreams: Luminous Voices in the Night, in the Art Gallery at Spitsbergen Kunstnersenter,
During the two weeks winter residence, we gathered information and recorded sounds, photos and videos to continue the project of a documentary on this experience. Frozen Dreams is a work in progress that continues, as we returned to our homes, in preparation for our next summer solstice Artic residency: and hopefully beyond. At this time collected dreams are 130 and the call is always open.

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Technical specification

Frozen Dreams is an installation that takes shape from the context in which it is presented, in a dark and silent space that can be closed or open whose size is determined by the acoustic feedback.

These elements determine the number of loudspeakers, their position in space and the placement of the luminous balloons; video projections may integrate the installation.
In order to work out the details, a dialogue, an exchange of useful information and possibly an on-site visit will be essential.

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Luminous Voices in the Night

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